

ALL SAINTS

Revelation = rev-uh-LAY-shuhn

A reading of visionary power and enticing detail. Revelation has inherent drama in its language and imagery. You only need to proclaim the passage with clarity and directness; its power will express itself through your voice.

Note the repetitions: "damage, land, sea."

Even stresses on the words in this line.

Emphasis on "Lamb," which will be repeated at the end of the passage.

LECTIONARY #667

READING I Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

A reading from the Book of Revelation

I, **John**, saw another **angel** come up from the **East**,
 holding the **seal** of the living **God**.
 He cried **out** in a **loud voice** to the four **angels**
 who were given **power** to **damage** the **land** and the **sea**,
 "Do not **damage** the **land** or the **sea** or the **trees**
 until we put the **seal** on the **foreheads** of the **servants**
 of our **God**."

I heard the **number** of those who had been **marked** with the seal,
 one **hundred** and forty-four **thousand** marked
 from every **tribe** of the children of **Israel**.

After **this** I had a **vision** of a great **multitude**,
 which **no one** could count,
 from every **nation**, **race**, **people**, and **tongue**.
 They stood before the **throne** and before the **Lamb**,
 wearing **white robes** and holding **palm branches** in
 their **hands**.

They cried out in a **loud voice**:

"**Salvation** comes from our **God**, who is **seated** on the **throne**,
 and from the **Lamb**."

READING I The first reading for this feast is taken from the Book of Revelation, specifically from two visions that are inserted between the vision of the opening of the sixth seal of the Book of Life, which the risen Christ holds in his hands (Revelation 6:12-17) and the introduction of the vision of the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1-5). Seals were used by powerful people in the ancient world to mark their property and lend authority to their communications.

These two inserted visions are triumphant in tone, the first being a vision of the sealing of God's elect (Revelation 7:1-8) and

the second being the vision of the multitude singing in praise of God's salvation (Revelation 7:9-17). Ancients believed that angels or spirit beings controlled the activities of cosmic phenomena like winds and planets. Thus, the four angels represent the winds at the four corners of the world who stand at the ready to exact God's judgment on the earth. The angel who holds God's seal commands them to wait until God's holy ones are marked with his seal. This seal will not save them from death because, as we learn toward the end of the second vision, they are the martyrs who went

through the great ordeal. Having gone through death, the martyrs will be able to participate in the unending heavenly liturgy before God's throne. The author likely has in mind Rome's persecution of Christians under Emperor Domitian (reigned AD 81-96) and might also harken back to the persecutions under Emperor Nero (reigned AD 54-68).

The number who are marked with God's seal is 144,000. However, we should be careful not to take this number literally. Mathematically, it is 12 multiplied by 12 and multiplied again by 1,000, but 12 is symbolic

Note the heavy emphases on the words in this exclamation.

TO KEEP IN MIND

As you prepare your proclamation, make choices about what emotions need to be expressed. Some choices are evident from the text, but some are harder to discern. Understanding the context of the Scripture passage will help you decide.

Allow this image to expand in your proclamation of it. Emphasis on "Lamb."

For meditation and context:

All the **angels** stood around the **throne**
and around the **elders** and the four living **creatures**.
They **prostrated** themselves before the **throne**,
worshiped **God**, and **exclaimed**:

**"Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving,
honor, power, and might
be to our God forever and ever. Amen."**

Then one of the **elders** spoke up and **said** to me,
"Who are these wearing **white robes**, and **where** did they
come from?"

I said to him, **"My lord**, you are the one who **knows**."
He said to me,

"These are the **ones** who have **survived** the time
of great **distress**;
they have **washed** their **robes**
and made them **white** in the **Blood** of the **Lamb**."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 24:1bc-2, 3-4ab, 5-6 (6)

R. Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

The **LORD's** are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.
For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.

He shall receive a blessing from the **LORD**,
a reward from God his savior.
Such is the race that seeks him,
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

Who can ascend the mountain of the **LORD**?
or who may stand in his holy place?
One whose hands are sinless, whose heart
is clean,
who desires not what is vain.

of fulness (and recalls the twelve tribes of Israel) and 1,000 represents an incalculably large number. Hence, John says that he could see, before God's throne, "a great multitude, which no one could count" from everywhere on earth. They are dressed in white, a symbol of victory in the Book of Revelation, because they were washed "in the blood of the Lamb," meaning that these holy ones share in Jesus' suffering to death. Likewise, the palm fronds that they carry are symbols of victory.

And what a beautiful song! It is introduced by the martyrs who cry out, "Salvation

comes from our God." The Greek word *sōtēria*, which is translated here as "salvation," can also mean "deliverance or safety," which has led some translators to use "victory" instead of "salvation" in this sentence. Immediately, those stationed around God's throne—the four living creatures that watch over it, the twenty-four elders who sit on thrones surrounding God's throne, and the angels—join the martyrs in singing a victory song to God. Notice that there are exactly seven attributions given to God in this song. Seven is a number symbolizing perfection. Finally, the Hebrew

word *amēn* means "truly or so be it." Although Christians use it now to conclude their prayers, it was first used in the synagogue as a way for those in attendance to affirm the words of the leader of prayer.

This reading paints a vivid picture of what the experience of the saints at this moment might look like. All in heaven glorifying God and singing songs of praise. We are invited to rejoice as well, knowing that these holy men and women have reached their reward and the suffering of the saints and martyrs have passed into the glory of God.

A reading proclaiming the mysterious nature of God's revelation.

Emphasis on "know." In the next line, on "him."

Note the interplay between "revealed" and "see."

A reading whose expressions are familiar but whose specifics are helpfully reintroduced to your assembly. This Gospel reading is an opportunity to teach the beatitudes anew.

Blessed = BLES-uhd

Note the rhythmical emphases. The first word in each beatitude is stressed, as is the last word in each line. Let that rhythm guide your proclamation.

READING II Our second reading comes from the First Letter of John, which is thought by most scholars to have been written by someone from the Johannine Christian community in a decade or so after the Gospel of John was written. If you know John's Gospel, you will quickly see that the vocabulary of this document is like the vocabulary of the Gospel, though it is not always used in the same way. The author of this document expresses frustration with members of the community who caused harm by separating from his group, even while they claim to love

READING II 1 John 3:1-3

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

Beloved:

See what love the **Father** has **bestowed** on us
that we may be **called** the children of **God**.

Yet **so** we **are**.

The **reason** the world does not **know** us
is that it did not know **him**.

Beloved, we are **God's** children now;
what we shall be has not yet been **revealed**.

We **do know** that when it is **revealed** we shall be **like** him,
for we shall see him as he **is**.

Everyone who has this **hope** based on him makes himself **pure**,
as **he** is **pure**.

GOSPEL Matthew 5:1-12a

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

When **Jesus** saw the **crowds**, he went up the **mountain**,
and after he had sat **down**, his disciples **came** to him.

He began to **teach** them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in **spirit**,
for **theirs** is the **Kingdom** of **heaven**.

Blessed are they who **mourn**,
for **they** will be **comforted**.

Blessed are the **meek**,
for they will **inherit** the **land**.

Blessed are they who **hunger** and **thirst** for **righteousness**,
for they will be **satisfied**.

Blessed are the **merciful**,
for they will be shown **mercy**.

God and love the brothers and sisters (see 1 John 2:18-23).

With this background in mind, we can understand that the author of this document identifies his community as "children of God," which is an expression of God's love for them. Further, he addresses the problem of the world's refusal to acknowledge them as such by saying that it is because they do not know God. From the tone of this document, we can assume that the author is including the schismatics in this group that he identifies as "the world." A defection from one's own community

hurts much more than rejection by strangers. Perhaps to console his community or at least himself, the author adds "what we shall be has not yet been revealed." What follows is a profound theological teaching. Our author says, "when it is revealed we shall be like him." Grammatically, the pronoun "it" should refer to God, but it is possible that the referent is Christ, since he is God's agent whose identity is one with God. Regardless, our author is saying that, when the divine power is revealed, we will be divinized (not that we will become God, but that "we shall be like him" when he

TO KEEP IN MIND

Smile when you share good news. Nonverbal cues like a smile help the assembly understand the reading.

Blessed are the clean of **heart**,
for they will see **God**.
Blessed are the **peacemakers**,
for they will be called **children** of God.
Blessed are they who are **persecuted** for the sake
of **righteousness**,
for **theirs** is the **Kingdom** of **heaven**.
Blessed are you when they **insult** you and **persecute** you
and utter every kind of evil **against** you falsely
because of me.
Rejoice and be **glad**,
for your **reward** will be **great** in **heaven**."

transforms us at the end of time)! Thus, the author's exhortation is to purify ourselves now so that, when the time comes, we will be worthy to see God as God is, when we join the communion of saints.

GOSPEL

Today's Gospel is a familiar one for most of us. The sayings in this reading are called beatitudes because of the Greek word *makarios*, which stands at the beginning of each saying and which means "happy or blessed" as in congratulations. To whom are these beatitudes addressed? They are addressed to the poor

in spirit—that is, those who are generous with what they have and care for the poor; to those who mourn—that is, people who go beyond themselves to give proper burial for the dead; to those who are meek—that is, people who are slow to anger and treat others with kindness; those who act justly and mercifully as God is just and merciful; and so on. The last two beatitudes—some describe them as one long beatitude in two parts—are different in style and tone from the others and probably reflect the situation of the early Church where local persecutions of Christians were commonplace.

But if you do these things, be glad. God's kingdom is near at hand! C.C.